

## **Carnival** by LadyLoba

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**Summary:** A strange series of so-called nightmares involve a group of students. The catalyst seems to be underground, in the true heart of a school. Warnings: violence, adult language, sex topics.

# Carnival

## Carnival

*This horse is too slow,  
We're always this close,  
Almost, almost, we're a freakshow*

Carousel, Melanie Martínez

### ***Chapter one: Grace Pierce***

It was almost midnight when Grace came into her wardrobe and cried as the blood in her hands started to dry, creating scratches that made them look like a crimson old map.

That morning she went into the school's bathroom, looking for her second favorite hobby (the first was play cricket with her friends): harass Nina Miles. It wasn't difficult, the stupid girl used to hide in the same cubicle everytime Grace or one of her henchgirls chased her.

Her feet kicked on the small white door as she yelled:

"Come on, little mouse! You can't hide from the cat forever".

Grace was specially angry that day because of Paul Harker. That morning, the girl showed up at the first training of the school's football team, waiting for Paul to finally notice her since the homecoming ball on July... but the boy didn't even stared at his partners, much less to Grace who was screaming and waving her arms at him; someone had to pay for that exhaustion, someone like...

"Nina!" she sang, giving a second kick to the door. She almost heard a soft cry inside the cubicle. "C'mon, dear, get out of here and show us your lame-ass face..."

A voice came out behind the door.

"Gracie, please... it's not a good time... I had a cold you know? If I come out perhaps I'd sneeze at you and the only lame-ass face would

be yours".

"How dare...?" Grace turned back and ran into the door. She wasn't a heavy person but the strength of her shoulders could give her a chance to open the door by force, and when it happens, the little slut would have a long time to regret her joke.

But when she was about to collide, the door opened by itself and hit Grace in the face; the girl felt like if a balloon exploded inside her nose, and one second later the pain made her cover her face with both hands, feeling a strange stitch followed by something warm and wet crawling over her lips. The hit broke her nose.

She vaguely saw a small shadow coming out of the bathroom, and then she squealed:

"Nina, you little fucker! You broke my fucking nose! COME BAAACK!"

Her screaming broke into a shrill moaning. The girl bended, wrapping her arms around the belly. Another stitch, harder than the one in the nose started to run around the waist and lower back, almost immobilizing her; Grace fell on her knees, still pressing her arms around herself, crying and moaning in pain, as she felt something wet and warm –just like in her nose –running down her thighs.

"Damn it..." she growled. Her period choose an *excellent* day to show up.

The rest of the day Grace was in a bad mood. Besides none of her friends could catch Nina to make her remorse for the nose incident, and Paul Harker didn't come to any class, so when she finally went home, her patience was as unstable as a spider web against the wind.

"Welcome home, dear!" said a well known voice when Grace opened the door. And she was there, the *lovely* aunt Betty, holding a pair of kitchen gloves and smiling at her. "Oh! Look at yourself; you're a little woman now!"

Grace faked a smile and then excuse herself to ran away from aunt

Betty's smooches and hid into her bedroom. Right there, Grace decided to take her payback against that little brat and turned on her laptop; if she couldn't hurt Nina's body that day, still could hurt her feelings, so she went right to her social media page and wrote:

"How do you know Nina Miles is around? Because every single boy start to puke because of her smell!"

It wasn't ingenious at all but at least would meet its goal. Grace put her earphones up and listened music the rest of the afternoon, reading some magazines borrowed by Heather –who, by the way, didn't show up to school since... 3 days perhaps? –and when she thought about that, she felt her stomach churn.

"Oh God..." she whispered as an arm wrapped around her tummy "I fucking hate cramps".

She went to the bathroom, feeling disgusted as usually when she had her period. She hated everything about it, the cramps, the inflammation in her belly, but mostly the blood. Red, clinging, stinky and warm, like a fucking sin... the sin of being a woman.

After the dinner, that was incredibly boring because of aunt Betty and her stories, Grace excused herself again and went to check her media, feeling the victory even before open the laptop. Most of her friends hated Nina almost as much as her, so she could imagine all the likes and funny (hurtful) comments on her post and smiled...

But instead of that, what she saw on the screen was more than ridiculous. It was... odd.

The post was filled with just three kind of comments: laughing – something she wanted but that constant "HAHAHA" wasn't funny at all –, balloons emoticons and a final comment down below the others that said *"Do you know who can't handle Gracie's smell? Paul and Heather."*

"Hey, what the fuck?" Grace's face went red, staring at the last comment. Who was the idiot who wrote that? She clicked on the profile pic, that was blurred and with no name. "I'm gonna make a hell of your life, fucking idiot..."

Nothing happened. The page continued unalterable. What was that? That comment was so surreal... Perhaps it was a fake account of Nina, that could explain everything more when she noticed the rest of the weird comments were from the same account. Yup, that explained a lot... Except why none of her friends seemed to comment the post, not even read it.

And then it started. A new comment appeared from the same account.

*"No, Grace. I am gonna make a hell of your life".*

Grace's eyes opened as much as they could, in a total shock. Her mouth made a strange sound as she replied to the last comment with her hands shaking slightly.

*"Hey, Nina, nice joke... You're gonna receive my congratulations tomorrow, sweetheart".*

She wrote that not because she really thought it was Nina, but because thinking that was more comfortable than any other possibility.

A new message jumped on the screen, and Grace felt a cold sweat behind her neck as she read it:

*"I'll give Nina your greetings soon, but first I must give mine to you"*

*"Hahaha, nice try, little mouse. Hey, if you stop this I will show you some mercy, kay?"* she replied, trying to control the shake on her hands. That disgusting joke was out of control, Nina should think more before trying to act against Grace the next time, but yes, if she stopped that, Grace will give her a few days of peace.

A new message jumped, but this time was from a familiar face. A blond, cute and proud face of a young man holding a soccer ball. Paul Harker.

"Oh dear!" Grace squealed in happiness. Paul Harker was there, making a funny comment, laughing with her, making Nina's joke weak with nothing but his presence...

*"Hey there, Grace! We should hang out soon. Come with me and you'll float"*

The girl smiled, letting go that last phrase as it didn't exist. Paul was there, saying hello and... now another comment! And it was from... Heather? Of course it was! Heather was there with her most recent hairstyle –red hair with a lot of soft curls –and smiling at the camera in the photo she took after her visit to the beauty salon.

*"Hello, darling. I'll come for ya soon and we'll float together"*

That word again. Grace bit her lower lip, staring confused at the screen; that was weird, she thought, why were Paul and Heather suddenly talking to her? Well, Paul never talked much to Grace but Heather showing up after three days of silence, without an explanation... that was bad, really bad. And beside those messages weren't normal at all.

Paul wrote again:

*"Come and you'll float"*

Heather wrote again:

*"Float with me"*

And again...

*"Come and you'll float"*

And again...

*"Float with me"*

"Stop" Grace growled at the screen, watching those comments appearing again and again with no control. Actually the comments showed up so fast the screen seemed like a highway of writing, and balloons emoticons. Red balloons emoticons. "STOP!"

The girl couldn't hold up anymore, and pushed the laptop out of the bed. She leaned out of the bed edge, staring at the blinking screen, in which a new message appeared:

*"It's not time to clean yourself, Grace?"*

A new cramp made Grace wrinkle her face as she ran to the bathroom, taking a pad of her desk.

The arrival to the bathroom looked like a long road to the girl; when she finally closed the door and walked towards the toilet was covered with sweat and punished by the hardest cramps ever. With difficulty she pulled down her pants and underwear, breathing hard and trying to not think of the pain.

"C'mon big girl, you can do this" she muttered, ripping off the pad's cover and looking down.

In that moment, a new cramp came out... and a lot of blood spilled on her thighs, running down her legs as a damned red river, splashing over the toilet seat, her clothes and the floor itself.

Grace dropped the pad as the "blood river" ran on her feet and beyond; with a new cramp a new crism wave came out of her belly and the monstrous scene was repeated. She looked sideways over her shoulder, shocking by the blood running on the floor, as if someone left the sink key open and the water was spilling all around, but it wasn't water. It was blood, her own blood covering the tiling with an awful scarlet tone.

Her mind finally overcame the daze and Grace decided to do something, if she continued bleeding like that she would die, so she started to yell as loud as she could:

"Help me! Someone help me, please!"

Her vision started to blurred, and that filled her with fear.

"Please! Mom! Aunt! Someone... I'm bleeding, I'm...!"

And then she felt something strange between her thighs. Something cold and sharp like the edge of a broken glass or like the sharp side of a knife... or, to be more specific, it felt like the sharp side of then knives. Despite the tremble of her full body, Grace managed to get her head down and see.

Ten sharp, long, black claws covered stained with blood were crawling on her thighs, pinching and caressing the bloody surface; they were so long that almost reached her knees, and they were in a strange position, as if the owner of those claws was trying to... *came out* from Grace's legs.

The girl couldn't handle anymore and tried to run, but she forgot her pants were still down and she stumbled, hitting against the sink. Grace took a fast look to the mirror and she saw behind her the most horrific thing so far. Behind her, a clown with a dirty white suit and orange hair was staring at her, so close that she could feel him pressing against her back.

The clown lift his hands and placed them over Grace's shoulders. But those weren't normal hands, the girl recognized the black claws that were between her legs, still with blood that stained her shoulders.

"Oh, Gracie..." the clown sang, smiling at her as his claws wrapped hard around her shoulders. Grace screamed out loud, staring at the clown's face by the mirror and feeling all her strength leaving her body.

The door opened, and Grace turned her head. Finally, someone came to save her, but that horrible clown was there now, how could her mother or aunt Betty fight against him? Grace was thinking of that when she saw both women looking at her with a worried face, not as worried as she waited.

"Gracie!" her mother yelled, hugging her thigh. "My darling, what's wrong?"

"M... mom... the..." she stuttered, trembling hard. "The blood... I was bleeding... and then..."

"Oh, what a mess" aunt Betty groaned. Grace looked at her, waiting to see the huge blood pool, but her aunt was stepping on it without a glare of surprise. "Grace, sweetie, don't drop the pads into the toilet, it is forbidden":

"N... No... aunt Bet..." Grace noticed suddenly her hands were covered with blood, and showed them to her mother. "Mom, look!"



The woman raise a brow, with a confused look in her eyes.

"Grace, what's wrong with you? Do you have a fever?" she asked, touching her daughter's forehead.

"Mom..." she begged, feeling more scared than before.

"Are these her first periods?" aunt Betty asked, smiling condescendingly. "It is normal to the first times to feel confused and nervous. Leave Gracie alone, Martha, she'll be fine".

"Okay, then. Come on, Gracie, go to your room".

Grace tried to say something else, something about the blood at their feet and the claws and the clown... but something told her it wasn't a good idea, so she shook her head and went to her bedroom. By the first time in almost eight years, Grace hid herself into the wardrobe, shaking like a leaf and looking at her hands, where the blood stared to dry.

Was that real? Could it be a nightmare, the most realistic so far in her life? The blood was there, but her family didn't seem to notice it. Nobody but her, just like the soft pain in her body and the fear...

The last thing she heard before fainting, tired of all the emotions, was a shrill laugh at the distance.